CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In a client processing system communicating with a modem over a communication link, the communication link including a telephone line connected to the client system, a method of responding to a disruption detected by the client processing system during communication with the modem, the method comprising:

terminating communication with the server in response to a disruption on the telephone line;

establishing an on-hook condition on the telephone line; and

waiting for a ring signal.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the disruption is caused by a Call Waiting signal.

3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

if the ring signal is received within a first predetermined period of time, then:

waiting for an off-hook condition to occur on the telephone line within a second predetermined period of time following the ring signal; and

if the off-hook condition is not detected on the telephone line within the second predetermined period of time, then:

establishing the off-hook condition on the telephone line; and

outputting an outgoing message onto the telephone line.

4. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

recording an incoming message after outputting the outgoing message;

re-establishing the on-hook condition after recording the incoming message; and

re-establishing communication with the ~~server~~ second processing system.

5. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

if a ring signal is received within a first predetermined period of time, then:

waiting for an off-hook condition to occur on the telephone line within a second predetermined period of time following the ring signal;

if the off-hook condition is detected within the second predetermined period of time, waiting for an on-hook condition to occur on the telephone line; and

upon detecting the on-hook condition, re-establishing communication with the ~~server~~ second Processing System.

6. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the ~~step~~ steps of, if a ring signal has not been received after a first predetermined period of time,

waiting for an on-hook condition to occur on the telephone line; and

upon detection of the on-hook condition, re-establishing communication with the ~~server~~ second Processing system.

7. In a client processing system communicating with a server over a communication link, the communication link including a telephone line, a method of managing a communications disruption during communication with the server, the method comprising:

terminating communication with the server in response to the disruption;

detecting an off-hook condition following the disruption;

if the off-hook condition is detected following the disruption, waiting for an on-hook condition; and

upon detecting the on-hook condition, re-establishing communication with the server.

8. In a client system coupled to a server system by a communication link, a method of establishing communication with the server, the client system including first transceiver means for communicating with the server and second transceiver means for communicating with the server, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a user input requesting initiation of communication between the client and the server; and

in response to the user input, selecting either the first transceiver means or the second transceiver means for communicating with the server based on a cost criterion.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein the cost criterion corresponds to a monetary rate associated with use of the first transceiver means to

communicate with the server relative to a monetary rate associated with use of the second transceiver means to communicate with the server.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the cost criterion is time-of-day.

11. A method according to claim 8, wherein the first transceiver means comprises a telephone modem and the second transceiver means comprises an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) transceiver.

12. A method according to claim 8, wherein the first transceiver means comprises a telephone modem and the second transceiver means comprises a cable television modem.

13. A method according to claim 8, wherein the first transceiver means comprises a cable television modem and the second transceiver means comprises an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) transceiver.

14. In a client processing system coupled to a ~~modem~~ communication device by a communication link, a method of managing a disruption in communication with the ~~modem~~ communication device, the method comprising:

terminating the communication with the ~~modem~~ communication device in response to the disruption;

pausing for a predetermined period of time;

after expiration of the predetermined period of time, determining whether the disruption is still present; and

automatically re-establishing communication with the ~~modem~~ communication device if the disruption is no longer present.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein the disruption is caused by a Call Waiting signal.

16. A method according to claim 14, wherein the communication link comprises a segment used by both the client processing system and a telephone system, the telephone system having an extension telephone coupled to the segment, wherein the disruption is caused by the extension being operated.

17. In a client-server processing system including a client processing system coupled to a first server processing system by a communication link, wherein a segment of the communication link is shared by the client processing system with a telephone system, such that an incoming telephone call by a calling party including Caller ID information is receivable by the client processing system, a method of providing an identity of the calling party to the user of the client processing system, the method comprising the steps of:

inputting the Caller ID information to the client processing system;

accessing telephone directory information stored on a remote server processing system;

locating a telephone number in the telephone directory information corresponding to the Caller ID information;

locating a name in the telephone directory information corresponding to the telephone number; and

providing the name corresponding to the Caller ID information to the client processing system.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein the telephone system has an extension telephone coupled to the segment, such that an incoming telephone call by a calling party including Caller ID information is receivable at the extension by a user of the client processing system,

19. In a client processing system coupled to a first server processing system by a communication link, wherein a segment of the communication link is shared by the client processing system and a telephone system, such that a telephone call including Caller ID information is receivable by the client processing system, the Caller ID information including a telephone number, the client processing system including a processor, a memory coupled to the processor, and a display device coupled to the processor, a method of responding to the incoming call, the method comprising the steps of:

inputting the Caller ID information;

determining whether the Caller ID information is stored in the memory;

if the Caller ID information is stored in the memory, determining whether a name corresponding to the Caller ID information is stored in the memory; and

if a name corresponding to the Caller ID information is stored in the memory, causing a message including the name to be displayed on the display device.

20. A method according to claim 19, further comprising the step of, if a name corresponding to the Caller ID information is not stored in the memory, transmitting a request to a second server processing system to provide the name corresponding to the Caller ID information, the request including the telephone number.

21. A method according to claim 20, further comprising the step of receiving the name corresponding to the Caller ID information from the second server processing system in response to the request.

22. A method according to claim 19, wherein the telephone call including Caller ID information is receivable by a user of the client processing system at an extension telephone.

23. A method according to claim 19, wherein the message includes an indication that an incoming telephone call is being received.

24. A method according to claim 19, wherein the client processing system is configured to allow the user to browse the World Wide Web.

25. A client system for communicating with a remote server system over a communication link, wherein a segment of the communication link is shared by the client system and a telephone system, the client system capable of

responding to user inputs received from a remote control device, the client system comprising:

a television set coupled to receive visual display information from the processor, the television set for displaying the visual display information to a user of the client system; and

a processor configured to cause the client system to allow the user to navigate through a graphical ~~an interactive~~ display environment displayed on the television set based on the user inputs received from the remote control device and information retrieved from the remote server system;

means for receiving the incoming telephone call;

means for recording the incoming telephone call; and

means for outputting a recording of the incoming telephone call to the user.

26. A client system according to claim 25, wherein the incoming call includes Caller ID information including a telephone number.

27. A client system according to claim 26, further comprising means for displaying a message on the television set indicating the presence of the incoming telephone call, the message including a name corresponding to the telephone number.

28. A client system according to claim 27, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the client system to:

input a caller identity specified by the user;

compare the Caller ID information in the incoming telephone call to the caller identity specified by the user;

if the Caller ID information in the incoming telephone call corresponds to the caller identity specified by the user, automatically transmit a predetermined electronic mail message to a predetermined logical address.

29. A client system according to claim 27, wherein the processor is further configured to cause the client system to:

input a caller identity specified by the user;

compare the Caller ID information in the incoming telephone call to the caller identity specified by the user;

if the Caller ID information in the incoming telephone call corresponds to the caller identity specified by the user, automatically initiate an outgoing telephone call to a predetermined telephone number.

30. A client system according to claim 29, further comprising means for playing a recorded audio message to a receiving party in response to the outgoing telephone call being connected to the receiving party at the predetermined telephone number.

31. A client system according to claim 25, wherein an incoming telephone call is receivable at an extension telephone by a user of the client processing system.

32. A client system for communicating with a server system over a communication link, the client system comprising:

a processor;

a memory;

a housing containing the processor and the memory, the housing including an indicator for providing a visible indication to a user of the client system;

a display device separate from the housing, the display device providing a display to the user based on display information received from the processor;

means for determining when the user has unread electronic mail; and

means for activating the indicator when the user has unread electronic mail.

33. A client system according to claim 32, wherein electronic mail addressed to the user is received by the server, the client system further comprising means for contacting the server to determine whether the user has unread electronic mail stored in the server.

34. A client system according to claim 32, wherein the indicator is a light-emitting diode.

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